



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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Four educational leaders named Principals of the Year

MADISON—Four principals have been chosen to represent the state's elementary and secondary school instructional leaders as the 2008 Wisconsin Principals of the Year. The four were named by Elizabeth Burmaster, state superintendent of public instruction, and Thomas Beattie, executive director for the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA).

To be selected as a Principal of the Year, principals must be nominated by their colleagues for achievements above and beyond the usual school program. They must maintain high expectations of staff, show evidence of outstanding contributions to their school and their profession, and be an established and respected member of the community. The 2008 Principals of the Year are

- Nanette L. Bunnow, Franklin Elementary School, Appleton;
- Anne M. Heck, associate principal, Elkhorn Area Middle School;
- Kathleen A. MacDonald, Nathan Hale High School, West Allis; and
- Kim M. Pahlow, Theisen Middle School, Fond du Lac.

"A principal must balance multiple roles as an instructional leader," Burmaster said. "They inspire the school staff and serve as an example for students while working to build a safe and educationally sound school climate that supports academic achievement. They must embody the characteristics of honesty, integrity, perseverance, dedication, creativity, enthusiasm, and compassion."

"Research shows clearly that great schools have exceptional principals who are dedicated to children and learning. Wisconsin principals are among the best in the nation. These Principals of the Year represent the best of the best and are most deserving of this prestigious award," said Beattie.

The Principal of the Year Selection Committee is made up of representatives from AWSA, the Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, Wisconsin Education Association Council, Wisconsin PTA, and a former

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National Distinguished Principal. MacDonald and Pahlow have been named Wisconsin MetLife/NASSP Principals of the Year. MetLife, an insurance company, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) will honor all state principals of the year at a symposium in fall.

Bunnow is Wisconsin's elementary representative to the National Association of Elementary School Principals/VALIC National Distinguished Principal program. She will be invited to an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., in October. Heck was named the Virco/NASSP Associate Principal of the year. She received her award at the AWSA Associate Principals Conference in Appleton in February. Additionally, she will be invited to a two-day recognition program in Washington, D.C., in April.

The elementary, middle, and high school Principals of the Year will be recognized at their respective AWSA workshops and conferences in January and February 2009. The Wisconsin Principal of the Year program is supported at the state level by The Educated Choice Insurance Agency.

Elementary Principal of the Year Nan L. Bunnow

With more than a decade of service as an elementary school principal, Bunnow is described as someone who is always looking to improve herself and her school. "One does not need to be associated with Nan in school to know of her commitment to quality education for children," said Peter C. Kelly, United Way Fox Cities, in his letter supporting Bunnow's nomination for Principal of the Year. "When one speaks with Nan, even for a short period of time, one can hear her passion for her work." Bunnow shares her knowledge of current educational research and exemplary practice regarding child development and literacy. She implemented literacy practices at Franklin Elementary School that other schools seek out as a model for increasing reading skills. At the district level, she worked on the Birth to Five program and was instrumental in establishing a kindergarten home visit program that makes parents and children feel welcomed to the school community. Bunnow encourages and challenges teachers to improve instructional practices and provides multiple staff development opportunities. Her continuous school improvement framework at Franklin has teachers working together to improve student achievement.

Associate Principal of the Year Anne M. Heck

When Heck started her associate principal's career, she encountered an overcrowded middle school that reported severe bullying problems. As she surveyed parents, students, and staff members, Heck developed methods for helping staff define and deal with bullying. She also improved the schools' use of conflict resolution and helped staff promote the peer mediation program and guidance classes. These approaches resulted in a decrease in bullying incidents of 75 percent. A parent cited Heck's consistency and fairness in dealing with student behavioral issues. "Anne's communication skills made a lasting

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impression on my daughter,” the parent said. Through her professional certification as an Institute of Higher Education representative, Heck has gained valuable experience in helping staff develop professional development plans that focus both on educator and student growth. Elkhorn Mayor John Giese praises Heck for being active in the community. He calls her “someone who has a vast thirst for knowledge” who shares what she learns with students, staff, and the community to make for a better learning environment. “Wherever she goes, she becomes an asset,” he said.

High School Principal of the Year Kathleen MacDonald

With 30 years of experience in the West Allis-West Milwaukee School District as a classroom teacher, academic director, assistant principal, and high school principal, MacDonald is said to possess “a passion for children,” which she extends “into accountability for their learning.” During major restructuring of Nathan Hale High School, MacDonald initiated several pilot programs. Some of those involve Collaborative Teams, which allow teachers to work interdependently in setting and achieving common goals focused on student learning; a change to the daily schedule that supports Academic Resource and Freshman Advisories; and a new teacher evaluation tool. Through data analysis, MacDonald and her staff developed a Reading Support Program for ninth- and 10th-graders and a Guided Math Study, both of which are having a positive impact on student achievement. In her efforts to personalize the educational experience for students at her school, MacDonald focuses on helping students transition to high school and providing opportunities that foster a sense of belonging. One of those efforts, PEACE Day, provided an all-school celebration of diversity to build student rapport.

Middle School Principal of the Year Kim Pahlow

Language Arts Teacher Tara Majeska calls Pahlow someone who is “student-centered and solution-oriented.” She praised her consistent support and unrelenting belief in her staff and students as motivating each to be their very best. Pahlow implemented a Student Cabinet that meets monthly with school staff to discuss issues facing students, the school, or the community. She also has embraced a Partner in Education relationship with a local counseling agency that provides healthy lifestyle opportunities; developed a Parent Network Organization that is involved in daily educational and recreational activities in the school; and implemented a structured daily common planning time that allows better parent, student, and staff communication. David Jackson praises Pahlow’s outreach to the community. He noted that she welcomes parent visits to the school and provides flexible meeting times. Pahlow calls her opportunities to lead staff in curriculum, instruction, and assessment among the most

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exciting and professionally rewarding of her administration. The Theisen Curriculum on the Wall allows staff to work together to develop interdisciplinary units as well as giving teachers a visual means of targeting and pacing their instruction. Both students and staff have found the effort a very effective way to reinforce what has been taught and to spiral information through numerous content areas.

“These Principals of the Year know the importance of instructional leadership to our New Wisconsin Promise,” Burmaster said. “We must have strong leaders in every school to ensure a quality education for every child.”

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://www.dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_54.pdf.